

The Kentucky Onramp to the Information Super Highway: The KEN KON Network

Kentucky has a window of opportunity to become a major player in the national research and educational networking community.

The Internet2 consortium recently announced a plan to replace its current national backbone network (Abilene) with the fastest and most advanced fiber optical network in the world (NewNet). One of the dark fiber trunk lines of NewNet will run from Indianapolis to Nashville, passing right through Louisville. If Kentucky can quickly make a commitment, Internet2 will create an “on ramp” in Louisville for Kentucky. If not, the premier research and education network will only be available to Kentucky by slower connections to either Indianapolis or Nashville. This is like having to drive to Indianapolis or Nashville to get on the Interstate highway system.

Internet2 is the foremost U.S. advanced networking consortium. Led by the research and education community since 1996, Internet2 promotes the missions of its members by providing both leading-edge network capabilities and unique partnership opportunities that together facilitate the development, deployment and use of revolutionary Internet technologies. Participation as a full partner on NewNet is critical to placing the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville on an equal playing field with other major research universities. It also makes the rich educational resources of Internet2 available to the comprehensive institutions, the KCTCS campuses and the entire K12 community via the Kentucky Education Network (KEN) that is currently being deployed as a result of Governor Fletcher’s support of the FY2006-08 Joint Budget Request.

By leveraging the current investment in KEN and adding the fiber connections of a Kentucky Optical Network (KON) we have KEN KON, a monster of a network.

The early cost estimate for the first phase of Kentucky’s KEN KON network is \$2,425,000 in one-time funds. The breakout is \$455,000 for the Louisville “on ramp,” \$1,550,000 to run fiber from Louisville to Lexington and \$420,000 for the Lexington “on ramp.” KEN KON will be expanded in additional phases as network needs and funds allow.

There are annual NewNet/Internet2 charges of \$590,000 which will come from the existing postsecondary budget if the \$2,425,000 becomes available.